

*Washington, DC* - In an effort to protect Medicaid services for New Yorkers and people across the country, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped pass a bill in the House that blocks the implementation of new Bush administration rules that would cut federal Medicaid payments to states. Unfortunately, despite the strong support in Congress, the White House has threatened to veto the bill.

"This bill helps protect Americans from losing important health care coverage they currently receive through Medicaid and it ensures that states won't lose a critical source of federal funding," Hinchey said. "Federal Medicaid funding is absolutely critical to New York State's effort to provide quality health care to all residents as well as to the state's goal of tackling its budget deficit. At a time when states are already feeling an increased financial burden due to Bush administration cutbacks, it is outrageous that the president would seek to shortchange funding for those Americans most in need."

The bill postpones until April 1, 2009 the implementation of a series of new regulations the Bush administration authored to cut Medicaid services and payments to states. The measure is designed to postpone any decisions on Medicaid rules until the next presidential administration takes over at the beginning of next year. Among other things, the bill blocks the implementation of regulations that would: limit state and federal Medicaid payments to public hospitals; eliminate payments for some rehabilitative services such as care for children of parents in foster care with mental illness; and restrict payment for certain outpatient clinic services such as dental and vision care.

"Hospitals all across New York and the country are dependent upon federal Medicaid funding to provide services to all patients, not just those on Medicaid," Hinchey said. "The president may continue to issue veto threats over this bill, but we're not going to stop in the House until we get this bill enacted."

Additionally, the bill also directs the Bush administration to provide an explanation of why the regulations were authored and requires that an independent authority review the impact the regulations would have on states if they go into effect.